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DISCOURSE

DELIVERED TO THE CONGREGATIONAL SOCIETY IN WOBURN,

JUNE 28, 1809,

AT THE DEDICATION OF THEIR MEETINGHOUSE.

M551.W78

BY JOSEPH CHICKERING, A. M.
MINISTER OF SAID SOCIETY.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

Charlestown:

PRINTED BY HASTINGS, ETHERIDGE AND BLISS.

1809.

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DISCOURSE.

After the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem and the captivity of the Jews, a remnant of that people were permitted to assemble in the land of their fathers, and rebuild the house of their God. On this solemn and joyful occasion, looking back on what they had suffered whilst in captivity, and deprived of religious ordinances, and forward on the prospect now opening to their view, they were affected; and the various emotions, that swelled their bosoms, were too strong to be suppressed. "Many of them wept with a loud voice, and many of them shouted aloud for joy, so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy, from the noise of the weeping of the people."

So, my brethren, this occasion brings to our minds past events, and presents to us prospects of futurity, which excite the most lively emotions; and it is difficult to distinguish between tears of regret and of joy. We remember our former house, where our fathers and we so often praised God, listened to divine instruction, and sought the Lord in his ordinances. We remember that awful night, when the flames of our

burning temple [a] ascended to the clouds, and were reflected back with such a frightful glare, as excited in many the apprehension, that the day of judgment was at hand. We remember our indignation against the unknown perpetrator of the sacrilegious act. We remember our painful apprehensions of jealousy and disunion. We remember our broken condition, when so many came to the place of our solemn assemblies; but found no room, and were obliged to retire; and we weep. But God has united our hearts, has strengthened our hands, and has blessed our labour. We are this day assembled in a house more beautiful and convenient than the former; a house built in harmony, completed without any accident, and now dedicated under circumstances, which equal our most sanguine hopes; and we weep; but they are tears of joy. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded his blessing, even life for evermore." Such, O our God, may our blessedness be; and may we go from strength to strength, until every one of us in Zion appear before thee.

We have already been uniting our hearts in gratitude, humility, and supplication to our God. Let us now endeavour to improve the interest, which this

(a) See notes at the end of the Sermon.

occasion inspires, to the purpose of religious instruction; and then take a brief view of the history of this town and christian society. The passage of scripture chosen for a foundation to the religious instructions of the day, is part of the forty eighth verse of the seventh chapter of Acts.

ACTS vii. 48.

The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands.

God is an infinite spirit. We can form no adequate conceptions of the mode of his existence. Still we may be satisfied, both from reason and scripture, that though he cannot be divided, he is every where present. Our text therefore cannot mean, that his presence is *excluded* from temples made with hands. It is often peculiarly manifested in them. In the temple built by Solomon, God gave sensible and miraculous tokens of his presence. He has promised in the gospel, that where only a few are gathered together in his name, there is he in the midst of them. Christian assemblies are usually held in temples, or houses devoted to religious purposes; and in such houses christians have often experienced the fulfilment of this gracious promise, and enjoyed the nearest communion with their God. There is nothing however in the *place* of christian assemblies, which command divine complacency. God regards the *worshippers*, and not the *temple*. "The true worshippers must worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him." With such he will be present and well pleased, wherever assem-

bled. All circumstances, which do not affect the spirit of devotion, or the purity of divine truth, are unimportant.

But if God be an infinite spirit, although no place can exclude his presence, and although it may be especially manifested in temples dedicated to him, because there he is particularly sought in his ordinances, yet he can *need* no habitation, neither can any temple *contain* him. This is the spirit of our text and of other parallel scriptures, as will appear by the connexion. "The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as saith the prophet. Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool. What house will ye build me, saith the Lord, and what is the place of my rest? Hath not my hand made all these things?" Think not, that by building me temples, ye can add any thing to my convenience or happiness; nor that my presence can be confined to your temples. The universe is my temple, and all things, which you behold, are my workmanship. The very materials, with which you build, are furnished by my bounty; and all your skill is taught by me. So superior is God to us, and so independent of all our services.

Why then, it may be asked, why do we build and dedicate houses to him? I answer, there is a sense, in which God is glorified by every house, which is dedicated to his service.

He, that offereth praise, glorifieth God. The more the church is enlarged, and christians are edified, the more numerous and fervent are the offerings of praise, that continually ascend before him. What means are

so well calculated to spread the knowledge of Christ, and to improve his disciples, as the ordinances of his own appointment? The ordinances of Christ cannot be duly attended without convenient temples. Our immediate object in building them should therefore be our accommodation, whilst we attend to religious ordinances. We should attend these ordinances for our improvement. And we should desire to improve, that we may be happy monuments of God's grace and glory.

The advantages derived from the public institutions of religion cannot be duly estimated, without some idea of what would be the state of society without them. We are naturally so indifferent, and even averse to religious truths and duties, that we need to have them continually impressed on our minds and consciences. Were we left entirely to ourselves, it is probable, that many would soon lose all sense of God and of religion. This is the case, where religious institutions are not enjoyed, or are treated with neglect and contempt; but where they are well administered, and regularly attended, the minds of men are improved, a christian spirit prevails, and the moral virtues flourish. In public worship and preaching, and in the special ordinances of christianity, the leading truths of religion are continually repeated, represented to the senses, and forced on the minds even of the most careless. Divine truth, thus impressed, and accompanied by the energy of the Holy Ghost, often produces a thorough conversion, and at least, lays some restraint upon vicious inclinations. The atten-

tive hearer has every Lord's day some passage of scripture illustrated, some divine truth impressed, and some christian duty inculcated. The hearts of the devout are warmed, not only by the direct force of truth, but by the sympathy of fellow worshippers.

Thus the institutions of christianity lay the most effectual restraint upon vice, and are the best nursery of knowledge, virtue, and piety. They are the means appointed by God, and adapted in infinite wisdom to advance the Redeemer's kingdom; and we may expect them to be made effectual by the blessing of the Spirit. By attending these ordinances, the church, which is the body of Christ, is enlarged, adorned with knowledge and with spiritual graces, and made fruitful in good works. The more the body is thus improved, the more is the head glorified; the heavenly hosts get clearer views of the wonderful work of redemption, and praise God with more understanding and warmer affections; for "unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places is made known, by the church, the manifold wisdom of God."

I need say nothing to convince you, my brethren and sisters of this society, of the importance of a convenient temple, in order to our attending with advantage the public institutions of religion, and advancing the glorious cause, which they are designed to promote. Experience has in this respect been our instructor. We have seen many, from sabbath to sabbath, necessarily excluded from our religious assemblies, and others, who were present, so poorly accom-

modated, as hardly to be able to attend with such composure, as is necessary to improvement.

From this view of the design of christian temples, we may learn, in what sense they ought to be deemed sacred. Such are the associations of our ideas, that if we attempt to attend religious exercises in a place, where we have been occupied with secular business or amusements, our business or amusements will be likely to crowd upon our minds, divert attention, and interrupt devotion. But if we assemble in a house appropriated to religious purposes, and are in the habit of considering the hours, we spend in it, sacred to God and to religious improvement, such a habit will greatly assist us in collecting our thoughts, and exciting devout affections. In this view it appears proper to devote temples exclusively to religious purposes, and to prevent their being connected, even in our thoughts, with worldly pleasures and employments; but to consecrate them in any other view is inconsistent with the spirituality of the christian dispensation. Let no one then imagine, that by the dedicatory services of this day we confer any mysterious sanctity on these walls. No, we only appropriate the building to religious purposes, and, as is proper on every important and interesting occasion, commend ourselves, our work, and our future prospects to the blessing of God.

Our subject will also enable us to unfold the nature of the crime of offering violence or insult to a house dedicated to God. It is true, that no such violence or insult can immediately affect the Most High. But

he, who deprives his fellow men of the means of religion, or endeavours to bring these means into contempt, opposes the advancement of that kingdom of truth and righteousness, which is the happiness of man, and the glory of God upon earth. Further, the crime we are considering cannot be attributed to mere thoughtlessness; but supposes great boldness in iniquity. The sacred uses, to which the place is devoted, must impress on the sacrilegious wretch a consciousness of that God, to whom the darkness and the light are both alike. The children of Israel were directed to pray with their faces towards their temple, that solemn thoughts and devout affections might be excited. Had any of them, when about to commit an act of wickedness, turned towards the temple, would not this have amounted to a positive defiance of God? This is then the awful nature of the crime of sacrilege. It is opposition to the cause of Christ, and of human happiness; opposition, under such circumstances, that it amounts to a defiance of the holiness and justice of Jehovah!

The subject leads me, in the next place, to remark on the style, in which temples should be built. The first object should be convenience. Then we should by a decent and generous style express our respect for the public institutions of religion. The devout man will say, "Is it time for us to dwell in ceiled houses, and the house of the Lord lie waste?" Respect for religion will induce us to wish, and endeavour, that the house of God shall not be less decent, than the houses, in which we live. The contrary ex-

treme of adorning houses of public worship is, however equally improper. The expense of unnecessary ornaments may occasion serious inconvenience to the poor, and divert from better purposes the wealth of the rich. Profusion of ornament appears also like vain ostentation, and may attract and divert the attention, especially of those who are unused to it, from the duties of religion. The style of a meetinghouse ought undoubtedly to be regulated by the abilities and habits of those, for whose use it is designed. What is decent and becoming in us, might be parsimony in another society, and extravagance in a third.

We remark, once more, the goodness of God in so inseparably uniting the best interest of his creatures with his own glory. What can be so important to us, as our moral and religious improvement, connected, as it is, with everlasting life and happiness! To pursue this, in its true relation to the honour of God, is the highest homage we can pay him, and comprises every duty, which he enjoins upon us. His providence is furnishing us with means of instruction both in private and in public. He is furnishing us with means of building temples. He allows us to give them to himself, and at the same time leaves them to our use. His language to us is, be happy, my children, be rationally and consistently happy; build your happiness on virtue and holiness, and you answer my requirements. What a benevolent master! Who will not serve him with cheerfulness! Shall any of us, who have taken a part in this honourable work, be the poorer? A few days of increased labour and self-

denial may be necessary to defray the expense. But what are these, compared with our own and our childrens' improvement, and viewed in the light of eternity! If we faithfully improve the advantages, we have now procured, we may hope for a larger reward at the resurrection of the just. The day of retribution will discover, what was true economy. We shall then find, that they, who gave from right motives, were laying in store a good foundation against the time to come.

Let us then seriously examine the motives, with which we have undertaken, and carried on this work. Have we had an ultimate view to the glory of God, to be advanced by furnishing ourselves and others the means of attending religious ordinances, and thus improving in genuine christianity? Is it our most ardent wish to bring ourselves and others as lively stones into that spiritual building of God, his church, and to polish those that are already joined to the building? If so, we may hope for admittance to that temple above, which neither time nor flames can destroy. But so far as any of us have been influenced by interested or ambitious motives; though we may have our reward, the reward we seek; yet in a religious view, our labour is vain. If such be our motives, this house is to us only a temple to ambition or to mammon. It is not to us the house of God. We cannot expect it to prove the gate of heaven.

Our fathers were a religious people. They acknowledged, they sought, and they enjoyed God. It was the hope of freely attending religious ordinances,

as we do this day, that induced them to leave their native land, and many things most dear to human nature. Some of them relinquished their possessions, forsook their friends, and were for a time separated even from their families. They encountered perils by sea, and perils by land. They endured hardships, under which only the hand of God could have supported them. But they entertained a lively sense of God's providence; and when they appeared to others ready to be swallowed up quick, felt themselves to be firm on the Rock of ages. Their faith appears to have been lively in proportion to the severity of their sufferings; and their history affords many examples calculated to warm us to holy emulation. But our attention must now be confined to the history of this church and town.

Early among the churches in New England, and animated by the prevailing spirit of piety, arose this church. It was the twenty third planted within the then Massachusetts government.

The records of this church previous to the year 1755 have been unaccountably lost. But we are able to give a particular account of the first settlement of the town, and gathering of the church, and of many of its early transactions. The early records of the town are remarkably full and correct, having been kept, for about thirty years, by Capt. Edward Johnson,[b] author of the "Wonder working providence of Zion's Saviour, in New England." Capt. Johnson has also, in his history, given a particular account of the early transactions of this church, to which himself belonged, using them as an example to show the gen-

eral manner of proceeding in the other New England churches. Governor Winthrop likewise in his diary, which has lately been made public, gives an account of the ordaining of the first minister of Woburn. Religion was then an object of particular attention to rulers as well as to people.

In the year 1640 news was brought to Charlestown of the conveniency of land adjoining their north bounds. Upon this a petition was presented to the general court for two miles square of land to be added to their head line. This petition was granted, and the addition afterwards increased to four miles square. A committee was soon after chosen, by Charlestown church, to explore the land, and make arrangements for erecting a new church and town. All was then a wilderness. The committee were obliged to spend nights without shelter "whilst the rain and snow did bedew their rocky beds." They have recorded one remarkable providence as "never to be forgotten." Some of the company sheltering themselves under the body of a large tree, which lay at a distance from the ground, no sooner was the last of them come from under it, at break of day, than to their amazement it fell; and they were obliged to dig out their provisions, their united strength being insufficient to remove it.

The place for house lots, and a meetinghouse was originally laid out on the plain, at the east end of our bounds; but afterwards removed to this place. (c) The first care was to procure a regular administration of the word and ordinances of Christ. Indeed a settle-

ment was hardly considered as fixed in those days, before these were established. A meetinghouse, and house for a minister were among the first erected; and to procure a minister appears from the records to have been the principal concern of the inhabitants.

On the 18th. of May 1642, [d] this town, which had been previously called "Charlestown village," was incorporated by the following brief law, now on the records of this commonwealth, "Charlestown village is called Woburn." [e] In the same year this church was gathered, and the Rev. Thomas Carter was ordained its first minister. In the course of these proceedings, days were repeatedly set apart for prayer and fasting. On one of these days in particular, Mr. Carter assisted. "Thus," says the pious Johnson, "these godly people interest their affections one with another, both minister and people." This fast day, and the sympathy it excited, was considered as under providence, preparing the way for the settlement of Mr. Carter. "After which," say the records, "they had some good encouragement."

It is a remarkable circumstance, that the people had been so oppressed by ecclesiastical tyranny, and were so jealous of their religious rights, that they undertook, in the presence and with the consent of a respectable council, to ordain their own minister. The ordination was conducted in the following manner. After the candidate had continued in preaching and prayer the greater part of the day, two persons, in the name of the church, laid their hands upon his head, and said, "We ordain thee, Thomas Carter, to be pastor unto

this church of Christ." Then one of the elder ministers present, at the desire of the church, made an appropriate prayer for God's assistance to his young servant in performing the weighty duties of his office.

Mr. Carter is said to have been a reverend godly man, apt to teach the sound and wholesome truths of Christ; and to have increased much with the increasings of the Lord. During his ministry, which was prolonged more than forty two years, there appears to have been the greatest harmony between him and the society; and the church was enlarged. In sixteen years after its organization, it increased from seven, to seventy four members.(f)

About five years before Mr. Carter's death, the town unanimously invited the Rev. Jabez Fox to settle as his colleague in the ministry. He was accordingly ordained, and was to the senior pastor an affectionate son in the gospel. He appears also to have been happy with the people, during the whole of his life; but was cut off, by the small pox, in the twenty fourth year of his ministry, and in the midst of his usefulness.

The serious attention to religion and morality, and the internal harmony of the town, during the period we have now been considering, are worthy of particular notice. No person was permitted to become an inhabitant without evidence of the correctness of his character. The selectmen were guardians, not only of the pecuniary interest of the town, but of the more important interest of morality and religion. We find them authoritatively reproving and punishing persons

for idleness, and for intemperance. We find them going through the town, and inquiring, whether children are properly taught and catechised, and appointing persons to perform these duties. Such was the prevailing regard to religious principles, that it was ordered, at one of the first town meetings, that if the selectmen should have any scruples of conscience in the transaction of their business, they should repair for advice to the elder or elders of the church. There is no indication, that during the whole of this period, the internal peace of the town was in any degree interrupted.

Some have supposed, that in those days, civil power and ecclesiastical influence were too much blended; but the idea appears not to be well supported. Our Johnson records as a divine commission some directions to the pilgrims, when setting out to plant this colony. Among these, speaking of church and civil government, he says, "be sure they be distinct, yet agreeing and helping one to the other." This author undoubtedly expresses the general spirit of the times. It is true, that a magistrate was always expected to be present at the gathering of churches and ordaining of ministers; but the object was to secure order, to prevent any thing, which under pretence of religion, might excite disorder in the commonwealth, and to testify respect for religious institutions. Is there any thing in this unreasonable, or inconsistent with the rights of conscience? If the magistrates in some instances took cognizance of heresy, it was *in general* only of such heresies, as endangered the peace of society, and was

no more inconsistent with the rights of conscience, than the present laws of this commonwealth against blasphemy. It is true, that the ministers of religion had at that time great influence with the magistrates and people; but it was only the influence of instruction and persuasion. Was this inconsistent with the rights of civil society? Would to God, that the intimate connexion between the interest of religion and of social order and happiness, were more sensibly felt at the present day; that magistrates might be nursing fathers to the church, and that religion might be acknowledged, to be the light and glory of the nation!

Soon after the death of the Rev. Jabez Fox, his son, the Rev. John Fox was chosen to succeed him in the ministry; although not with the same unanimity, that had marked the former proceedings of the town. This minister appears to have had a feeble constitution, was unable to preach constantly, even in the early part of his life, and was for fifteen years before his death entirely blind.

In the year 1728 the town voted to settle a colleague with Mr. Fox; and in the same year Rev. Edward Jackson was chosen, and ordained. Between these two ministers there was a most unhappy difference; and the people were much divided. About this time the precinct, now Burlington, was incorporated as a parish. A separate church and society was also formed within the limits of what is now Woburn, of the adherents of Mr. Fox. Rev. Josiah Cotton was installed pastor of this separate society. The town con-

tinued in a very broken and unhappy state for many years.

In 1754 Mr. Jackson died. The union of the two parishes soon became a subject of discussion. Rev. Josiah Sherman, who was then a candidate, united the affections of the people of both societies. He was ordained minister of the first society only; but Mr. Cotton, perceiving the prospect, withdrew; and measures were immediately taken for the two churches and societies being legally formed into one. The venerable Fox lived to witness this happy prospect. He died about a year after Mr. Sherman's ordination. The union of the two churches and societies was soon after completed, and not a vestige of that division now remains.

Attention to public worship, after Mr. Sherman's settlement, was uncommon. The meetinghouse was constantly crowded. Even the aisles and gallery stairs were occupied; and after the house had been considerably enlarged, there was hardly sufficient room. But this happiness was transient. Mr. Sherman found his salary unequal to his expenses. Grants were repeatedly made him; and a permanent addition was fixed to his salary. Still his embarrassment continued, and increased. At length some of the people grew uneasy, and the parish refused to grant him the further assistance, which he requested. He was disheartened, and requested a dismission. After he had often repeated and urged the request, it was granted, although by many of the people with the utmost reluctance.

This took place at the commencement of the revolutionary war; and the town was for almost ten years in a destitute, broken, and unhappy condition. All attempts to resettle were vain. Such was the regret of many of the people at having parted with Mr. Sherman, that a proposal was laid before the parish to invite him to return. Upon this proposal, the people were about equally divided.

At length Rev. Samuel Sargeant was invited to settle, and was accordingly ordained; though not without great opposition. The opposition continued and increased; and occasioned another separate society to be formed in the town, of the denomination of *Anabaptists*. Notwithstanding the warm opposition to Mr. Sargeant, his christian character was never called in question. He was advised to ask a dismission, and honourably recommended by the result of a mutual council; and his ministerial connexion was actually dissolved by a vote of the church in the year 1799.[g]

It is now five years since your present pastor was ordained. The unanimity, that attended his settlement, was considered as an earnest of good. May he improve in prudence and in all ministerial qualifications; and may your candour, affection, and improvement encourage, and reward his labour.

We are now assembled in the fourth meetinghouse, which has been erected by this church and society.[h] Never had any people greater reason thankfully to acknowledge a divine Providence, on a similar occasion, than we now have. There are few instances, in

which a society is perfectly united in building a meeting-house. Many circumstances, such as the time of building, and the size, style, form, and situation of the house afford occasion for different opinions, interests, and feelings. What then had not we to fear? Having.....but I forbear to enumerate circumstances, which all must feel to have been painful and threatening. The danger is now past. And I cannot on this occasion forbear to mention the promptness and unanimity, with which you voted to rebuild, and adopted the necessary measures; the quietness, with which the minority, in some cases, where there was a difference of opinion, has submitted to the majority; the perfect satisfaction, that has appeared between the society and their agents; the zeal and liberal spirit manifested in purchasing seats; and the general joy, with which we are now assembled, as equally grateful to my own feelings, honourable to you, and propitious to our future prospects.

This house is decent, and becoming our circumstances. It unites simplicity with elegance. It is such, as we could well afford to build, and at the same time evinces an honourable respect, and zeal for the institutions of christianity.

But have not our thoughts, and conversation, and affections been too much occupied with the *means* of religion, so as to neglect the *end?* It is possible to build temples, and frequent them, and be always engaged about divine subjects, whilst we are dead to the *spirit* of religion. Permit me again to call your attention to the importance of considering and improving

this house, as a mean of improving in christian knowledge, virtue, and piety, and thus advancing the glory of God. It will be in vain, that we have procured a convenient place for religious assemblies, if we neglect the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. It will probably be in vain, if we present our bodies here before the Lord, whilst our minds and hearts are engrossed with the cares and vanities of the world. If we would improve, let us come crying after knowledge, and lifting up our voices for understanding. Let us endeavour to feel our own guilt and impotency; to direct our hopes to that blood, which is sufficient for the priesthood and for the people; and to give ourselves up to the influence of that Spirit, who applies this blood, renews and sanctifies the elect of God, and helps the infirmities of the humble followers of the Lamb.

I now behold many, whose characters; characters according to which their everlasting condition must be fixed, will probably be formed in this place. I behold some, whose hoary heads and feeble frames admonish them, that their time is short. After a few more religious opportunities, their accounts must be sealed up to the judgment of the great day. None of us can assure himself of another sabbath. Let us be up, and working the work of God, whilst it is day; for the night cometh, in which no man can work.

The priests and fathers of the Jewish nation wept at the building of their second temple; because it was less magnificent, than that, which Solomon had built. But its glory afterwards exceeded that of the former.

And every christian temple, where the doctrines of the gospel are preached in clear and lively terms, exceeds in glory the temple of Solomon. That temple, with all its ornaments, and the costly sacrifices, that were performed in it, were only types and shadows of those glorious things, which are here declared without an allegory. We behold the great drama, which has been acting, ever since the apostasy, drawing to a close. The last times are evidently approaching. The hosts of heaven, and the rebellious spirits, who are reserved in chains under darkness, are all looking forward with lively interest to the last closing scene. What beings have more reason to be interested, than we; we, who have now opportunity to make our calling and election sure? May we suitably feel this interest, and be one in heart and affection with Christ and the Father, that when the closing scene shall be unfolded, and the depths of divine wisdom be disclosed to all rational beings, we may, in contemplating the divine glory, find everlasting delight! Amen.

NOTES.

Note (a) page 4.

ON the night of the 17th. of June, 1808, at about half past eleven o'clock, the meetinghouse was discovered to be on fire, and in less than an hour was reduced to ashes. Several circumstances evinced design, and caution to prevent other damage. There is only one considerable opening from the common, where the house stood, which is to the south west; and a night was chosen, when the wind blew from the north east. Had it blown from any other quarter, other buildings must inevitably have been consumed. Most of the powder in the tower of the house, amounting to near 200lb. must also have been removed, as the explosion was so inconsiderable, that many persons, who were awake, and within a mile of the spot, did not notice it. The west door of the house was also observed to be open, when the fire was first discovered. Notwithstanding design was so evident, no circumstance has transpired to justify a suspicion of any individual.

Note (b) page 13.

The following sketch of this historian may not be uninteresting. He emigrated from the county of Kent, in England, and was among the very early settlers in this country. He was one of the committee chosen by Charlestown church to erect a new church and town, now called Woburn, drew a plan of the town, was chosen recorder, and continued to keep the records until within a little more than a year of his death. Capt. Johnson was also the first deputy from Woburn to the general court, and continued to represent the town, with little interruption, while he lived. He was appointed by the general court clerk of the writs at Woburn; also one of a committee "to consider some orders, and to put the country in a posture of war;" also, about the time of the restoration of Charles II. one of the committee of twelve, "to consider, and debate such matter or thing of public concernment, touching our patent laws, privileges, and duty to his majesty, as they in their wisdom shall judge most expedient, &c." When a lieutenant, he was sent with captain Cook to Providence, to apprehend Gorton and his rebel band.

As the evidence of captain Johnson's being author of the Wonderworking Providence has been considered as resting on a tradition mentioned by Judge Sewall to Prince, and recorded by him in the introduction to his chronology, I mention the following circumstances to corroborate it. 1. The very

particular account given of Woburn, proves the author to have been particularly interested, and probably an inhabitant of the town. 2. In the 190th page of the history, when enumerating the militia officers in the commonwealth, and eulogizing many of them, the author modestly omits his own name, saying, "the band of Woburn led by another Kentish captain." 3. There is such a similarity of sentiment and expression in some parts of this history concerning Woburn, and in the town records, as affords a presumption, that they were both written by the same hand.

It appears that captain Johnson was not rich, as in a town tax, made just before his death, his part was less than the average part of all the inhabitants. He died April 23, 1672. Many of his descendants now live in Woburn and Burlington.

Note (c) page 14.

This statement is made on the following authority. The records, after mentioning the laying out of the town at the east end of the land granted, and the appointment of a meeting of the intended inhabitants, proceed,

"1640, 16 of 12mo. The persons appointed came to the place, to the number of forty, where the new town should have been placed, marking trees, and laying bridges. The way being so plain backward, that divers never went forward again."

"29 of 12mo. Mr. Newell, captain Sedgwick, lieutenant Sprague, and some others by Charlestown appointed, advised to remove the house lots and place for the meetinghouse to the place, where they now stand."

I have not been able to discover any corroborating account of this removal.

Note (d) page 15.

The following facts and dates are thrown into one view.

May 18, 1642, Town incorporated.

August 14,* 1642, Church gathered.

November 22, 1642. Rev. Mr. Carter ordained. He came from England this country in the year 1636, being then a student in divinity. When led to the ministry at Woburn, Mr. C. was connected with the church in Watertown, although in what relation does not appear. Our records mention, a reason for not applying to him sooner, a doubt of Watertown's parting with him. Rev. Mr. Phillips was then minister of Watertown. Mr. Carter died Dec. 1, 1684. Æt. 74.

Rev. Jabez Fox graduated at Harvard College, 1665; ordained at Woburn, Sept. 5, 1679; died Feb. 28, 1703. Æt. 56.

Rev. John Fox graduated at Harvard College, 1698; ordained at Woburn, Nov. 17, 1703; died Dec. 12, 1756.

* This is stated from the records. Wonderworking Providence states, 24; but it is presumed that this is one of the typographical errors with which that book abounds.

Rev. Edward Jackson graduated at Harvard College, 1719; ordained at Woburn, 1728; died Sept. 24, 1754. Æt. 54.

Rev. Josiah Cotton graduated at Harvard College, 1722; installed pastor of Separate Society in Woburn, July 15, 1747. He had previously been ordained at Providence, and after his dismission from Woburn was settled at Sandown, where he died in 1781. Aug. 22, 1759, the two churches were united into one.

Rev. Josiah Sherman graduated at N. Jersey College, 1754, also received a degree at N. Haven same year, and at Cambridge in 1758; put under the class of 1754. He was ordained at Woburn, Jan. 28, 1756; dismissed April 11, 1775; and afterwards settled at Goshen in Connecticut.

Rev. Samuel Sargeant graduated at Dartmouth College, 1783; ordained at Woburn, March 14, 1785; dismissed May 27, 1799.

Rev. Joseph Chickering graduated at Harvard College, 1799; ordained at Woburn, March 28, 1804.

Note (c) page 15.

The present mode of admitting persons to the church differs very little from that adopted at its first formation. Any person, desiring to be admitted, applies to the minister, who, if satisfied of the propriety of the step, propounds him or her to the church, and at the same time appoints a meeting of the standing committee of the church, consisting of the pastor and deacons, to inquire into the person's views, experience, and knowledge of christian ordinances. This meeting is open to all members of the church disposed to attend, who have also liberty to ask any questions. If the committee are satisfied of the candidate's qualifications, they recommend him, or her, to the charity and communion of the church. A time is then appointed for his or her admission, provided no objection be offered. In the mean time, every member may seek further satisfaction, and, if he finds cause, enter objections. If no objection be offered, the person is admitted at the time appointed. The ancient mode differed only in this, that the person to be admitted, if a male, was required to repeat his relation of his views, &c. in public; but less was required of those, who through bashfulness, could not speak publicly to edification.

The covenant has undergone several revisions, and differs considerably from the form originally adopted. It now stands thus;

COVENANT.

You do now solemnly and sincerely give up yourself and yours to God, in the Lord Jesus Christ, according to the covenant of grace, to be for him, and for him only; resolving and engaging, to make the word of God the rule of your faith and practice.

You do take the ever blessed Jehovah for your chief good and last end. You do take the Lord Jesus Christ for your prophet, priest, and king; the Holy Ghost for your sanctifier, leader, and comforter; promising, by the help of God, to walk before him in holiness and righteousness all your days.

You do also put yourself under the care and watch of this church, and the government of Christ herein, and promise to attend duly on the holy ordinances of Christ here administered for your edification in faith and holiness. This you solemnly engage, and promise, before God, angels, and this assembly.

RESTIPULATION.

I then signify to you, in the name, and with the concurrence of this church, that we receive you into our sacred fellowship and communion; and do promise, through Christ's assistance, to watch over you, and carry ourselves towards you with such brotherly affection and christian regard, as the rules of the gospel demand and enjoin in such a relation. This we do, imploring our Lord Jesus Christ, that both we and you may be found faithful in his covenant, and may have grace to serve him with that holiness, which becomes his house for ever.

I now declare you to be a member of this church in full communion.

Note (f) page 16.

From this period in 1658, to the ordination of Mr. Sherman in 1756, the records being lost, we cannot ascertain the increase of the church. During Mr. Sherman's ministry, 119 souls were added; between his dismission, and Mr. Sargeant's settlement, 27; during Mr. Sargeant's ministry, 59; after his dismission, and previous to the settlement of the present pastor, 7; since that time, 61. All these accounts are exclusive of persons received from other churches.

Note (g) page 20.

The following are extracts from the result of the council. After advising Mr. S. to ask a dismission, they say, "We do not advise to this measure on account of any culpability, which we have found in Mr. Sargeant; for justice and charity to him oblige us to say, that his moral character as a man, as a christian, and as a minister, stands fair and unimpeached; no charges having been offered of any immoral conduct, false doctrine, or criminal delinquency in office." "And being ourselves persuaded of his integrity and uprightness, and the goodness of his heart and character, we can, and do, with the greatest sincerity, recommend him to any people, who may see fit to employ him as a minister."

Note (h) page 20.

The first house, which was built at the first settling of the town, stood on the common, south west from this. In about thirty years a larger house became necessary to accommodate the growing society, and a new one was erected on the hill, south east from this. That house was originally forty feet

square, and was enlarged, soon after it was built. Our late house was raised in 1748, and finished in 1752. It was originally forty two feet wide, and fifty five long; and nineteen feet were added to its length, after the two societies were united. When that house was burnt, a meeting stood adjourned to the following Monday, when it was voted, with only three dissentients, to rebuild. The necessary measures were taken by the society with such promptness, and the business pursued by their agents with such activity, that within a year from the passing of that vote, this house was completed. It is fifty five feet wide and sixty long, exclusive of a projection, six feet by thirty, in front, and ornamented with a handsome steeple. The entry on the gallery floor affords a convenient hall for public meetings on business, and is finished with accommodations for that purpose. The pews in the house, one being reserved for the society's use, were sold at auction, previous to the dedication of the house, for $10,911. The whole cost of building does not exceed $7,911. Gain $3,000. The people appear determined, with great spirit and unanimity, to appropriate this money to the establishment of a fund, which if permitted to accumulate, will soon be sufficient to defray a considerable part of the annual expenses of the society.

The agents for building the house were Major Benjamin F. Baldwin, Lieut. Willard Jones, and Lieut. Bartholomew Richardson.